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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 22 April 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. JOEWONO (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 31/88 (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN* recalled that at its 39th meeting the Committee had mandated him to conduct consultations with the delegations of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with a view to seeking further clarification on the statements made by the respective leaders of the two countries relating to the developments in the Indian Ocean. The Committee had wished also to be informed whether those statements could be construed as indications of willingness on the part of those countries to co-operate with it.

2. In pursuance of that mandate, he had had talks on Wednesday, 20 April, with the delegation of the United States, represented by the Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Leonard. After being informed of the views of the Committee, Ambassador Leonard had stated that at the current stage he was not in a position to give any further clarification on the statements of the United States Government leaders. Although in his view there was definitely a clear desire on the part of both the United States and the Soviet Union to deal in a positive manner with the escal ting arms race in the Indian Ocean, there had so far been no steps undertaken of a substantial nature, although some initial procedural actions had been made. The representative of the United States had informed him that substantial talks might be commenced within a few weeks. The United States position with regard to the problem of the Indian Ocean and to the Committee remained unchanged so far, while its future position could not be divorced from mutual and reciprocal actions on the part of the Soviet Union.

3. In the talks which he had had with the delegation of the Soviet Union, represented by Mr. Ovinnikov, the latter had pointed out certain basic points of the position of the USSR in regard to the problems relating to the Indian Ocean and also in regard to the work of the Committee. The Soviet Union considered first of all that a basic point relating to the establishment of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean was the dismantling of foreign military bases. The representative of the Soviet Union had pointed out that his country had never had any intention of building military bases in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet delegation therefore regretted that in the relevant General Assembly resolution reference was made to an "escalation of the military presence of the great Powers conceived in the context of great Power rivalry".

4. The representative of the Soviet Union had expressed the willingness of his country to seek, together with other Powers, ways to reduce on a reciprocal basis the military actions of non-coastal States in the Indian Ocean and the regions directly adjacent thereto. He had added that the Soviet readiness to contribute to the materialization of the idea for establishing a zone of peace in the Indian

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* The text of the Chairman's statement is reproduced in full in the summary record in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee.

Ocean should not entail any obstacles to freedom of navigation and research in the Indian Ocean. The participation of the Soviet Union in consultations relating to convening an international conference on the Indian Ocean was dependent on the willingness of the Committee to take into account the Soviet Union's approach to those matters.

5. Mr. MOHAJER (Iran) thanked the Chairman for his efforts and his report to the Committee. In view of the importance of the question dealt with, it would be advisable to have the text of the Chairman's statement reproduced in full in the summary record.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that if it was the wish of the Committee, the text of the statement he had just made would be reproduced in full in the summary record.

7. It was so decided.

8. Mr. MULYE (India) also thanked the Chairman for the consultations which he had conducted on behalf of the Committee and for the report which he had presented on the subject. Those consultations had shown that there had been some progress, although the two great Powers concerned had not yet proceeded to bilateral contacts. The Committee was still at a preliminary stage; however, that modest advance in its work should not be disregarded.

9. He then read out a passage from the final communiqué of the Bureau of the New Delhi Ministerial Meeting of the non-aligned countries, wherein the Bureau affirmed its firm and unanimous commitment to the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI) and the Colombo Declaration. It had condemned the establishment and expansion of foreign military bases and called for the elimination of great-Power military rivalry in the Indian Ocean. It had further urged the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean to desist from membership in military alliances or pacts conceived in the context of great-Power rivalry. The Bureau had noted that consultations were under way for convening a conference on the Indian Ocean and had expressed the hope that the great Powers and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean would co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee; lastly, it had taken note of recent statements by great Powers relevant to the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

10. Mr. YEO (Malaysia) associated himself with previous speakers who had thanked the Chairman for his efforts. He proposed that the consultations thus begun with the Powers concerned should be maintained on an ongoing basis so that the Committee could be kept informed of the development of the situation, particularly if bilateral talks were to take place between those Powers.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that he had raised with the two delegations concerned the question of the possibility of maintaining ongoing contacts; they had replied that if and when new developments occurred, they would get in touch with him and consultations on the question could resume. He then drew to the Committee's attention a letter which he had received the same morning from the Canadian

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(The Chairman)

delegation in reply to his letter of 14 April. In that letter the Permanent Representative of Canada recalled that in the past Canada had not participated in the Committee's consultations for the reasons given in the letter addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on 30 June 1976 but stated that he had transmitted the Chairman's letter dated 14 April to the competent authorities of his country and would inform the Committee of the response to its request when he heard from them. He noted that the letter from the Canadian delegation was not a refusal to co-operate and might even be regarded as a slight encouragement.

12. With regard to the Committee's programme of action mentioned in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 31/88, he recalled the proposals which he had made the previous day during the closed meeting, namely, that he should send a letter to the members of the Committee and to the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean asking for their views and suggestions regarding the formulation of a programme of action, in the hope that their replies would be received in time for the Committee's next session in September, so that they could be included in the Committee's report. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee authorized him to send a letter to that effect.

13. It was so decided.

14. Mr. HSU Yi-min (China) said that the proposal to establish the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace reflected the legitimate desire of the States and peoples in the Indian Ocean region to defend their independence and sovereignty against super-Power infiltration. The proposal had therefore received extremely broad support. The Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries had, in its political declaration, explicitly called for the elimination of any manifestation of great-Power military presence in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, in a resolution adopted at its thirty-first session, the General Assembly had denounced the intensification of great-Power rivalry in the region and had expressed regret over the fact that certain great Powers had not found it possible to co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee. There were mounting demands on the part of world public opinion for the two super-Powers to withdraw their military presence from the Indian Ocean. It had been unanimously agreed at the Committee's current session that the Chairman should urge the two super-Powers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union, to clarify their attitude.

15. While placating public opinion every now and then, the two super-Powers had so far done nothing to remedy the situation. On the contrary, their military activities and their rivalry in the Indian Ocean region were constantly on the increase. One super-Power claimed to be in favour of the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean, at the same time stating that it was prepared to seek ways of reducing military activity on a reciprocal basis and within the framework of an agreement. In other words, the demilitarization of the region as proposed by one super-Power would serve as a pretext for bargaining with the other super-Power. The other super-Power, which talked constantly about détente and disarmament, had even more on its conscience. It was not only bent on obstructing the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace by harping on repudiated arguments but had also been asserting that, since the Indian Ocean was the only maritime passage

(Mr. Hsu Yi-min, China)

linking the European and Far Eastern sectors of the Soviet Union, it was entitled to have various freedoms guaranteed and needs satisfied. It rejected any mention of great-Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean or of great-Power military presence; such an attitude had completely unmasked the attempt by that super-Power to prevent the Indian Ocean from becoming an anti-hegemonistic zone of peace and had also exposed its wild ambition to elbow its rival aside and establish exclusive domination over the region.

16. In order to establish the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, it was imperative, first of all, to put an end to all expansionist activities by the super-Powers and to halt their rivalry for hegemony in the region; it was also vital to demand that the great Powers should withdraw their entire military presence and dismantle all their overt and covert military bases.

17. The Chinese Government and people had always actively supported the States of the Indian Ocean region in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. They therefore supported the just proposal of those States for the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

18. At the same time his Government hoped that the States in the region, whether big or small would firmly do away with the intervention of the super-Powers, combat expansionism in all its forms and enhance relations among themselves in accordance with the principles of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

19. Lastly, his Government hoped that those States would strengthen their unity, jointly oppose imperialist and hegemonist aggression and work together for the convening of the conference concerning the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

20. Mr. THEODORACOPOULOS (Greece) thanked the Chairman and the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for giving him an opportunity to state the views of his delegation with respect to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 31/88.

21. His delegation felt great concern with respect to the outcome of the consultations on the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. In line with consistent Greek support for the defence of peace and justice, his delegation would spare no effort in helping the Committee to carry out its task. The principles set forth in the Declaration were consistent with the purposes of the Charter, which Greece had undertaken to respect. That spirit was eloquently reflected in the sixth preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI). Bearing in mind the provisions of that paragraph, his delegation had voted for General Assembly resolution 31/88, which, in particular, requested the Ad Hoc Committee and the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean to continue their consultations with a view to formulating a programme of action leading to the convening of a Conference on the Indian Ocean.

(Mr. Theodoracopoulos, Greece)

22. In his delegation's view, the proposed conference, the aim of which was of primordial importance, should be a world conference held at the highest level. In carrying out its mandate, the Committee should bear in mind the provisions of the Charter relating to international peace and security, the principles contained in General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI), and the relevant international instruments relating to the strengthening of peace and the reduction of armaments.

23. Greece, as a maritime country, welcomed the fact that the littoral States in the Indian Ocean region which had proposed the convening of the conference had given assurances concerning respect for the principle of freedom of navigation in accordance with long-standing custom and international law.

24. The CHAIRMAN expressed his appreciation for the co-operation he had received from the members of the Committee and the representative of States participating in the work of the Committee as observers.

25. He declared the Committee's current session closed and expressed the hope that at the following session real progress would be made towards the implementation of the objectives set out in General Assembly resolution 31/88.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.